

NSC BRIEFING

12 November 1953

NSA review completed

INDOCHINA

I. Viet Minh attack against north side of
Tonkin delta expected shortly.

A. Viet Minh 308th and 312th divisions
plus two independent regiments in
position and engaging in intense in-
telligence reconnaissance.

1. Some elements have started infil-
trating delta.

II. French state they expect attack from north
about 20 november or soon thereafter.

III. ~~Largest battle of Indochina war took~~
place in this area in January 1951.

- A. Marshal DeLattre repulsed frontal
attack directed at Hanoi.
- B. Objective of currently expected at-
tack likely to be more limited than
in 1951.

Objectives:-

- 1. Enemy may try to take French posts
along northern fringe of delta.
- 2. May try to cut communications
between Hanoi and Haiphong.

IV. Meanwhile, enemy reconnaissance noted near
Lai Chau, French outpost in northwest
Tonkin.

- A. Possible one enemy division now west
of delta may be concentrated against
this area.
- B. French would have little choice but to
evacuate Lai Chau garrison.

1. Would deal heavy blow to current guerrilla operations of tribal groups.

V. ~~Probably~~ ^I In anticipation of thrust from north, French last week abruptly pulled back some 20 battalions engaged in Operation Mouette south of delta.

A. General Cogny, French commander in Tonkin, suggested on 8 November he hoped to beat enemy to the punch in north.

VI. Despite public claims of important successes, French disappointed by enemy ^{ability} ~~reaction~~ ^{to avoid Mouette ops,} ~~tion to Mouette.~~

A. Official French report says one enemy division suffered casualties equivalent to one battalion. (1/9)

B. A second enemy division against which operation directed fell back on Thanh

French maintain status

quo -

See no chance French

victory -

No real Strategic objective
